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Social change, the institution of service and youth: the case of service in the lives of rural-born Dutch women, 1840–1940

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ABSTRACT. *This article investigates the antecedents, experience and consequences of service in the lives of rural-born Dutch women within the urbanizing and industrializing context of the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. The decision to enter service was often taken by the girl's parents against the background of a distress-ridden household. From the latter part of the nineteenth century, the migration fields of servants widened, with women more often serving in middle-class households in the growing large cities. The consequences of out-migration to these urban and more diverse labour and marriage markets, and for some women also the educational work setting of urban service itself, were that larger proportions of women contracted advantageous marriages and settled outside their rural region of birth.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Young people or adolescents might be seen as harbingers of change, today and in past societies.[1] When generations of youngsters spend their formative years under different historical and social conditions than their parents, their adult lives often diverge from those of the older generation.[2] Hence the comparative study of youth is a good starting point for assessing how people accommodated their behaviour or discovered new ways of coping as a response to social change in the past. Since the influential work of Philippe Ariès in the 1960s, charting the changing experience of youth has been one of the primary aims of research on the history of adolescence and youth.[3] This literature has long moved away from bourgeois

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and male models of youth, and recently it has expanded by incorporating working-class and female adolescent experiences. In contrast to a bourgeois depiction of adolescence as devoted primarily to education, these recent studies emphasize the centrality of labour in the lives of the young.[4] Until the twentieth century, the larger part of the formative years of working-class and middle-class young people was spent working, either as unpaid help in the parental household or in the fields, or by being gainfully employed in a variety of rural and urban occupations. In this article it is argued not only that work provides one of the main handles for exploring the changing experience of the young in the past, but that work settings might have been loci and mediators of social change as well. Certain work experiences in youth exerted influence on the behaviour of adolescents and their transition to adulthood independent of their social class and parental background. It is contended that such a work setting, for females at least, can be found in the institution of service.

Service – and I use the term broadly here in order to include both farm servants and domestics in urban middle-class households – has been the quintessential adolescent occupation in Western European societies from pre-industrial times up to the Second World War. Termed 'life-cycle service' by Peter Laslett, the occupation was intertwined with the phase of semi-independence between childhood and the attainment of full adulthood upon marriage.[5] Entering service for a distinctive period in one's life was a common experience in the past. It has been estimated that in most Western European countries during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, servants constituted at least 10 per cent of the population.[6] The number of people who experienced 'life-cycle service' was of course much higher, with estimates ranging from a half to two-thirds of the population.[7] In the industrializing context of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the number of farm servants steadily declined while the demand for female domestics by the growing urban population increased. In many European countries at the end of the nineteenth century urban domestic service was numerically one of the most important female occupations. In the Netherlands, for instance, a third to half of all women who were gainfully employed worked in the domestic-service sector, and 90 per cent of them were unmarried young women.[8] As work- experience, service was thus, as Michael Mitterauer has also argued, of great significance for the history of youth.[9] Yet what do we know about the influence of service on the life chances of young women in the past and how, under the influence of urbanization and industrialization, might the impact of service have changed?

Historical demography and family history have not shunned the study of service, but the question of what the effect of service was on women's

lives has hardly been addressed. Usually, servants have been studied as part and parcel of the composition of households, often in pre-industrial societies. This research has sought to explain the presence of servants as a main characteristic of the Western European family both in terms of the social position of households and their stage in the family cycle and in relation to patterns of nuptiality and family formation.[10] It has been shown that the supply and demand of servants was based on their functionality both for their families of origin and for the households receiving them as servants. Households employing servants needed the extra help when their children were too young to work on the farm or in the household. Conversely, families that sent their children into service could do with the financial contribution, while a daughter or son who became co-resident in another household also created room in crowded houses and meant one mouth less to feed. Needless to say, servant-employing households were usually, but not always, better off than the families that sent their children into service.

Often this research uses the concept of family strategies, and centres attention on the rationales behind household decisions and the determinants of family behaviour. It is assumed that families acted purposefully in order to cope, survive or become upwardly mobile, within the opportunities and constraints of their immediate surroundings and the larger macro-historical setting. Decisions pertaining to the family unit such as migration, and choices concerning the life courses of children, such as leaving the parental home, out-migration and marriage, have been studied against the backdrop of the perceived advantages and disadvantages for the entire household.[11] Recently, the strategies concept has become vigorously contested. Critics argue that individual preferences and conflicts among family members have been largely ignored. Moreover, it is contended that little direct evidence of strategies is presented but that intentions are often inferred from patterned data, offering *ex post facto* explanations of observed behaviour.[12] This criticism also applies to the way service has been studied, that is, mainly in terms of the causes and consequences of service for the sending and receiving households as a whole.[13]

Indeed, the institution of service has been linked to the 'European Marriage Pattern' with its late age at marriage and its high proportion of celibates. In this respect, service has been seen as a repository for individual youths who were waiting to be married. During this waiting time, service would have offered young people training and informal education in the sense of learning-by-living, and while circulating between households and villages servants would have enlarged their pool of potential marriage candidates.[14] However, only a few studies have investigated

empirically what was the impact of these unique characteristics of the experience of service on the life chances of the young.[15]

In this article, the life-course approach is introduced as a tool for conceptualizing and studying the experience and impact of service on individual young people in the past. The interdisciplinary life-course perspective is geared towards the study of age-related events, positions and trajectories in individual lives. Central to a life-course approach is the social and historical embeddedness of lives. Networks and institutions, such as families, work organizations and peer groups, are seen as mediators, influenced by social and historical change and in turn shaping individual lives. Secondly, the life-course approach emphasizes biographical continuity. Individuals' pasts affect their present circumstances, and their present situations in turn shape their future lives.[16] In this way, advantage or disadvantage might accumulate over a lifetime. Thus individuals originating from deprived backgrounds, having been disadvantaged in childhood and youth, will most often experience deprived circumstances in middle age and old age as well.[17] Alternatively, however, a change in the direction of a life for the worse or for the better, might stem from macro-level-induced events largely beyond individual choice, such as for instance war, depression or revolution. These events can provide a so-called 'bridging environment' or 'turning point', offering resources or exerting a levelling influence on those experiencing the event.[18]

Although working as a servant reinforced class differences and could be a degrading and exploitative experience, reflecting and accumulating disadvantage over the life course, it might also be hypothesized that service was a 'turning point' in women's lives in the past. In the first place, service entailed an important independent migration experience. While migrating among positions, servants were literally removed from their parental home. At the same time, they acquired a larger and more diverse choice of potential spouses. Moreover, service might also be called an educational work-experience. At a relatively young age, servants became acquainted with alternative role models in the households of their employers. Service provided training while working. By circulating and assuming different jobs, servants learned new tasks, gained in responsibility and acquired knowledge and skills. Whereas through migration and work-experience all service positions might in a sense have provided a bridging environment, this might have applied in particular to urban domestic service. Both the need for adaptation and re-socialization and the geographical break with the parental home were more marked for urban domestic servants than for regionally employed farm or domestic servants.[19]

A small body of empirical studies has tested whether urban domestic service was a bridging occupation, 'bringing' rural-born women

permanently to urban areas and being a channel of upward social mobility through advantageous marriages. However, the results have been inconclusive, mainly for methodological reasons.[20] First of all, most of these studies compare the marriages of in-migrated urban domestics to those of local urban women. Because considerable proportions of urban servants returned home to marry, or married elsewhere, in this way only a selective group of servants is investigated. Moreover, urban marriage markets were segmented according to the scope of a woman's network and the familial resources she could deploy, influencing which spouse she was able to marry.[21] Therefore a comparison with women from the same region who did not enter service or migrate into urban areas is more instructive when one wants to get a grip on the determinants and consequences of service in the life course.[22] The use of the 'static' marriage certificate is another reason for the discrepancies in findings. Marriage certificates do not provide continuous information about pre-marital migration and are unreliable as far as female occupational titles are concerned. Most often they leave out female occupations, and at best they state the woman's final occupation prior to the wedding. Moreover, the location of post-marital settlement cannot be collected from a marriage certificate. Often a couple married in the community of the bride's parents and moved into their own community, days or even months after the wedding. Thus in order to gauge the effect of previous life events on experience later in life longitudinal data are indispensable.[23]

This article investigates the determinants, experience and consequences of service in the life courses of rural-born women from a longitudinal and a comparative perspective, comparing the lives of women who were involved in service with those from the same region who did not enter service. On the basis of continuous nominative population-register data, the life courses of more than 700 rural-born women from the Dutch rural province of Zeeland were reconstructed, while evidence from oral-history interviews and autobiographies has been used to illustrate and complement the quantitative results. Against the background of nineteenth- and twentieth-century industrialization and urban growth, the article charts subsequently why young women entered service; what service meant as a migration and work experience; and how service influenced the adult life chances of women in terms of their residence and social position at marriage.

II. SOCIAL CHANGE, FEMALE ZEELAND YOUTH AND ENTRY INTO SERVICE

By now, the general contours of the process of social changes related to nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Western European urbanization

and industrialization are well known. Population increase, economic growth and industrialization, increasing urban employment opportunities, rural–urban migration and advances in transportation and technology are the main constituents of this process. Compared with other Western European countries, industrialization in the Netherlands was relatively late. Although manufacture and trade steadily increased during the first three-quarters of the nineteenth century, only after 1870 did Dutch economic growth really start to accelerate. First, employment opportunities in building and trade in the cities of Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague expanded. In a later phase, roughly from the end of the nineteenth century, provincial towns also began to develop as a result of population growth and industrialization. Among the growing urban middle classes the demand for domestic servants increased rapidly.[24]

While the western and central parts of the Netherlands rapidly urbanized and industrialized, the insular coastal province of Zeeland, located in the utmost south-western corner of the Netherlands, remained up to the middle of the twentieth century an area without much industry and with a low level of urbanization. The Zeeland islands consisted of many small rural communities. On every island a central town catered to its agricultural hinterland. Zeeland's economy was based on capital-intensive, market-orientated agriculture specializing in the production of cash crops such as wheat, rapeseed and flax. Social structure in the Zeeland countryside during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth was far from egalitarian; a large gap existed between small layers of rich farmers and the local petty bourgeoisie and the mass of agricultural laborers. Not surprisingly, during the last decades of the nineteenth century the Zeeland economy was severely hit by the international agricultural depression.[25]

In order to study the life courses of the rural women born in this coastal province, a 0.5 per cent sample of all female children born in ten-yearly cohorts between 1835 and 1927 was taken from the birth registers of municipalities belonging to five Zeeland islands.[26] A third of this sample of 668 girls died before the age of 12, so the sample was supplemented by adding a sister for every girl in the sample who survived at least until age 12. The life courses of these 732 girls, of whom more than half were born to agricultural labourers, were reconstructed up to their marriage and post-marital settlement on the basis of population-register data.[27] Life courses were followed continuously, even when sampled individuals migrated out of their birthplace or home region to other parts of the Netherlands. Apart from this quantitative life-course database, various other sources were used to seek for motives behind the entry into service and to illustrate the work-experience of service. These include

tape-recorded interviews with former domestic servants held by interviewers from the Zeeland Documentation Centre, published interviews by Zeeland historians, an autobiography of a woman who worked as a servant during the period 1934–1944, and contemporary government reports concerning the working and living conditions of agricultural labourers in the Netherlands in the period around 1900.[28]

More than half of all the girls were born into unskilled labouring households, mostly those of agricultural labourers. Some 13 per cent came from skilled labouring backgrounds; 15 per cent originated from farming households; 14 per cent were daughters of shopkeepers, merchants and self-employed artisans; 4 per cent had fathers who worked as lower civil servants or supervisors; and only 1 per cent of their fathers had a higher occupation.[29] For these rural-born women, service was an important occupation.[30] In all, 36 per cent of Zeeland girls entered service during their lives.[31] Of those cohorts of women born between 1853 and 1872, as many as 50 per cent became co-resident maids. These cohorts entered the labour market at the turn of the twentieth century when the demand for domestic servants in Dutch cities soared. Of later-born cohorts the proportion of women who entered service gradually declined because of widened female employment opportunities in department stores, industry and other services. But even for those young Zeeland women born in the first decades of the twentieth century, service remained an important job option (see Table 1).

The social-class background of the servants informs us about the spread of participation in the institution of service among Zeeland girls and thus gives an indication of the social status of the occupation. When the number of servants is compared with the total number of women from a particular class, it appears that both 40 per cent of young women from the unskilled labouring class and 40 per cent of those originating in skilled labouring families experienced life-cycle service. Thirty per cent of the daughters of both merchants, shopkeepers and artisans on the one hand and of supervisors and lower civil servants on the other entered service. Finally, almost a quarter of all farmers' daughters spent part of their life as a servant. Thus, service was a fairly common work-experience for all kinds of female youth.[32] In comparison with other rural regions in the Netherlands, and more generally in Western Europe, the prevalence of Zeeland-born women entering service was probably quite high. Except for service or fieldwork, the ruralized Zeeland economy offered few alternative employment opportunities for unmarried women. Moreover, large parts of the population were highly proletarianized; the very many households of agricultural labourers needed the supplement to the family income that a daughter in service could ensure. But also in farm families and in the

TABLE 1
Percentages of Zeeland women who entered service, per birth cohort, 1835–1927

Birth cohort	Servants		Total number of women
	%	N	
1835–1852[a]	24	21	88
1853–1862	48	39	81
1863–1872	51	54	105
1873–1882	37	32	87
1883–1892	42	44	106
1893–1902	43	39	91
1903–1912	28	25	91
1913–1927	13	11	83
Total	36	265	732

[a] The proportions of women born between 1835 and 1852 entering service are artificially reduced because the population registers between 1850 and 1860 registered most servants at their parents' address. The cohorts 1835–1852 and 1913–1927 cover longer periods because the sample includes some sisters close in age to women in the cohorts, ten born in 1835–1852 and two born between 1922 and 1927.

Source: Historical Sample of the Netherlands (HSN) database, Mobility Females Zeeland, HSN release MFZ.02/MFZ.03.

petty bourgeoisie, family crises (such as the death of a parent) could result, as we will see later, in the decision to send a daughter into service.

Zeeland women experienced life-cycle service in the true sense, as a transitory phase of semi-independence between childhood and adulthood. More than 90 per cent of all Zeeland women who entered service eventually married, paralleling exactly the proportion of the ever-married among women who did not enter service.[33] Moreover, servanthood was connected with the period of late youth or adolescence. Half of all servants entered the occupation only after they had reached the age of 18, irrespective of their social class.[34] This is in sharp contrast to some of the literature on pre-industrial service that suggests that girls and boys departed for a co-resident position as early as the age of 10 or 12.[35] How, then, did youngsters spend the period between leaving elementary school, approximately at age 12, and leaving the parental home as a servant at around age 18? Interviews with former servants point out that many girls first had to help in the household, by taking care of younger brothers and sisters, by working in the fields or by becoming day maids, which meant that they worked as a servant but returned home every day. For

half of all servants, life-cycle service lasted for about five years and ended immediately prior to marriage. Half of all servants had married by the time they had reached the age of 23.

Contemporary government reports and interviews with former Zeeland servants show that in the decision-making process surrounding their entry into service the opinion of the parents weighed strongest, especially when the girls were still young. Nevertheless older girls sometimes actively strove to enter a service position. Service was perceived – by these girls at least – as a good alternative to fieldwork. Migration to a service position in the cities was also attractive to young women for the adventure and for urban opportunities for leisure and lifestyle.[36] Finally, some girls wanted to enter service to escape the obligation to care for older family members so as to be able in the long run to marry and start their own families. The event-history analysis in Table 2 shows that both family circumstances and local opportunities influenced the relative risk of entering service.[37] Girls from unskilled labouring-class families were significantly more likely to leave home to become servants,[38] while farmers' daughters on the contrary were less likely to do so. Moreover, after the death of a parent, and especially when the father died, girls were also more likely to enter service. The same held true for young women who as children had frequently migrated with their families. Having a large number of older and younger sisters in the household also significantly heightened girls' chances of entering service. Finally, girls whose father was not present to sign their birth certificate, usually illegitimate children, were also more prone to leave home for a position as a co-resident maid.

Thus family circumstances explain for the largest part why and when women entered service. Shortage of living space at home and a lack of or decline in household economic resources and the ensuing need for a contribution to the family budget explain the higher chances of leaving home of daughters who came from unskilled labourers' households, from broken families (in which a parent had died)[39] and from large households containing many girls. A daughter who left to become a co-resident maid saved the family on food costs and her remitted earnings were a supplement to the family budget. The spreading of economic risk over diverse types of labour markets and lack of sufficient alternative labour opportunities in the local community may have been yet another reason for the heightened chances of girls with many older and younger sisters to enter service.[40] Meagre ties and social resources in the community, as in the case of migratory families, may have hindered parents' efforts to find gainful employment in the local community for their daughters. Finally, family culture might also have played a part in the decision to send daughters into service. As can be learned from oral and written sources, in families

TABLE 2
Determinants of entry into service of Zeeland women born 1835–1927, when aged 12–30 (Cox proportional hazard coefficients)[a]

	Relative risk
FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES	
Occupational category, father	
Higher occupations	0.20**
Merchants, shopkeepers and artisans (ref.)	1
Lower civil servants, teachers and supervisors	0.74
Farmers	0.62*
Skilled labourers	1.37
Unskilled labourers with land in use	1.42*
Unskilled labourers without land in use	1.54*
Unskilled labourers land use unknown	1.15
Literacy, father	
Literate (ref.)	1
Literacy unknown	1.71**
Illiterate	1.23
Religion, father	
Dutch reformed (ref.)	1
Roman Catholic	1.29
Calvinist denominations	1.09
Parents' network	
Parents born in birthplace servant (ref.)	1
One born outside birthplace servant	1.29
Both born in other communities	1.19
Number of family migrations	1.15**
Death of father	
Father alive (ref.)	1
Father deceased	1.56***
Death of mother	
Mother alive (ref.)	1
Mother deceased	1.32*
Number of siblings	
Number of older brothers	0.94
Number of younger brothers	0.89*
Number of older sisters	1.24****
Number of younger sisters	1.20****
HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL CONDITIONS	
Birth cohort	
1835–1852	0.28****
1853–1862 (ref.)	1
1863–1872	1.10
1873–1882	0.84
1883–1892	0.68
1893–1902	0.76
1903–1912	0.40****
1913–1927	0.22****

TABLE 2. (*Cont.*)

	Relative risk
Region	
In Zeeland (ref.)	1
Outside Zeeland	1.46
Type of community of residence	
Rural (ref.)	1
Urban	1.04
Number of women who entered service	263
−2 Log Likelihood	3157.769
Model Chi-square (df)	124.399 (29)
Significance	0.0000

[a] On the basis of the 0.5 per cent sample of all Zeeland women born 1835–1827, described in the text. * = significant at 0.10 level, ** = significant at 0.05 level, *** = significant at 0.01 level, **** = significant at 0.001 level. See note 37.

Source: HSN release MFZ.02/MFZ.03 (see note to Table 1).

with many girls often a 'culture of service' existed, with generations of sisters following in each other's 'servant footsteps'.[41]

III. THE EXPERIENCE OF SERVICE

While entering service was firmly embedded in the family economy, being a consequence of adverse or worsened family circumstances, service itself entailed important individual experiences, independent of these familial conditions. In this article, the focus is on service both as a migration experience and as a work-experience in women's lives. The scope of servants' migration was first of all connected to the demand for servants by different occupational groups. After 1860 the demand for farm servants declined markedly, especially after the worldwide agricultural depression of the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The depression not only led to mechanization and rationalization of farm practices but also to farmers substituting regular agricultural labourers for daily labourers.[42] On the other hand, with economic and urban growth, the demand for servants by the urban middle classes increased. Government reports dating from around 1900 mention that many girls from Zeeland, and also from other rural areas in the Netherlands, migrated to service positions in the cities, attracted by the higher urban wages.[43] This is reflected in the distance and direction of servants' migrations in subsequent periods. During the period 1860–1880, three-quarters of all their moves were still directed to an employer within the island, peninsula or region within Zeeland from which the servants originated. During the last two decades of the nineteenth

TABLE 3
Migration trajectories of female Zeeland servants, according to birth cohort (in %)

Type of migration trajectory	*Birth cohort*			*Total*
	1835–1872	*1873–1902*	*1903–1927*	*1835–1927*
Regional trajectories				
Only local and regional destinations	*60.3*	*43.8*	*39.6*	*50.5*
In villages	38.4	27.1	16.3	30.6
In villages and towns	10.4	6.3	10	8.6
In towns	11.5	10.4	13.3	11.3
Mixed trajectories				
Destinations both within and outside region	*21.8*	*35.3*	*20*	*27.6*
In villages	3.1	5.2	6.7	4.6
In villages and towns	13.5	18.7	10	15.3
In towns	5.2	11.4	3.3	7.7
Out-migrated trajectories				
Destinations outside birth region	*17.7*	*20.8*	*40*	*22.1*
In villages	2.1	1	3.3	1.8
In villages and towns	2.1	6.3	10	5.0
In towns	13.5	13.5	26.7	15.3
Total	99.8	99.9	99.6	100.2
N migration trajectories	96	96	30	222

Source: Based on complete servant-migration trajectories, compiled from HSN release MFZ.02/MFZ.03 (see note to Table 1).

century and the first decades of the twentieth, however, Zeeland maids increasingly moved outside Zeeland and especially to the urban centres of Rotterdam and The Hague. Between 1920 and 1940, 70 per cent of all their moves involved employers outside Zeeland.[44]

However, when complete migration trajectories of servants are reconstructed – that is, all successive moves from entrance into service to the end of the service career – it becomes clear that the huge relative increase in urban-directed moves must be accounted for by one particular group of servants (see Table 3). Indeed, half of all the servants did not migrate outside the boundaries of their birth province, but circulated only regionally within it. A quarter of them combined regional jobs with employment outside Zeeland (mixed migration trajectories), and another quarter of all girls worked only outside Zeeland (out-migrated trajectories). When the change in migration trajectories of subsequent birth cohorts is evaluated, the relative increase of out-migrated trajectories at the expense of both regional and mixed ones is evident. But although

rural–urban migration gained in importance, of those servants born in the first three decades of the twentieth century, still almost 40 per cent obtained only regional service positions during their youth. In the early twentieth century, working within the region on a farm or as a domestic in a bourgeois household in the villages and provincial towns was still a viable way of spending one's youth. As a former farm maid who entered service in 1925 at the age of twelve explained: 'In those days all the farmers needed maids and you had to work at the farms … Because yes, if there was no other work, there had to be some place else and you couldn't stay at home the whole day.'[45]

Apart from moving around and away, working as a servant could be a highly educational experience. Oral history and personal memoirs vividly illustrate how young women perceived and evaluated their work as farm maid or urban domestic servant. In these memoirs comparisons are often made regarding the work setting, such as for instance the heavy work in the cold and the social life as a farm maid, and the better financial rewards of domestic service. Most servants perceived moving from their rural background to urban middle-class households as a huge transition. 'Everything was different. The life style of the middle classes differed very much from that of country life … life outdoors didn't exist anymore, and there were no animals any longer. That was hard in the beginning.'[46] 'Oh that was such a change, it is hard to imagine, later you still think about it. In the city there was already a bath and here was nothing, there were still old-fashioned toilets with buckets. That was indeed a change.'[47] It was particularly those servants who held positions in the urban upper- or middle-classes who emphasized the training aspects of their jobs: 'These were distinguished people, so you had to learn all of that of course.'[48] A former servant of an architect in The Hague was educated by her employer: 'We did everything together. I still learned a lot. Because it was very different than where I came from.'[49]

Training in middle-class households comprised cooking, table-setting and etiquette. A woman who served a lawyer's family in Vlissingen talked about the experience of cooking:

> Cooking? We learned that from books, mainly because we had of course never done that before. And that is how we learned to prepare Russian salad and waiting and setting the table, that was also a whole ritual. And when there was a dinner they had two different wines and we used finger bowls and I decorated the table with ribbons and ivy leaflets, with little flowers in it. And they liked it very much, though I just made it up actually. And so I learned it myself.[50]

Another former servant compared her period in service in the household of a vicar with going to domestic-science school:

> I came there and I had to cook immediately. And she [the employer] was a very good cook and she taught me everything completely. So I haven't missed anything of that sort of thing,

otherwise you would say you have to go to domestic-science school if you want to learn such special things. But she had the same [knowledge] and I learned it all from her.'[51]

However, service also broadened one's social horizon in a more general way. In this respect the following comment by a former servant is illustrative:

Yes for sure, because after all, you start as a child and before you really have become an adult, you learn something everywhere of course. One did it that way and another employer lived very different from how your parents lived. You learn to know a lot from different kinds of people.[52]

Thus, service was a training period, offering a general education and specific skills in a period when formal schooling for the masses was not yet available. Moreover, apart from learning-on-the job in the household of their middle-class employers, the association with fellow servants and friends must also have been instructive. Whereas farm servants often worked in semi-isolation, cut off from their peers and restricted in terms of how they spend their free time, urban domestics had more opportunities for leisure activities and for developing an adolescent lifestyle with their female and male age group.[53] In a study on education and change in the lives of rural-born German-American domestics in early-twentieth-century America, Carol Coburn has argued that urban domestic service 'provided the opportunity for increased self-confidence, financial independence, female networks, assimilation to American [urban] society, socialization and technological competence'.[54] There is no reason to believe that this experience diverged much from that of the rural-born Zeeland girls who migrated to the Dutch cities around the turn of the century.

IV. SERVICE AND MARRIAGE

What was the impact of life-cycle service, and more specifically of its migration experience and educational work setting, on women's lives? In this section we will test the proposition that urban domestic service was a bridging environment, 'bringing' rural-born women to the cities and facilitating their contracting advantageous marriages. First of all, the continuous life-course data shows that 37 per cent of the women who entered service settled outside their home province, compared with only 16 per cent of the women who had not been servants. More than half of the latter started their married lives in their home community (see Table 4).[55] Post-marital settlement patterns are clearly related to the scope of youthful migration trajectories, and the range of migration in turn depended on whether women were employed as servants during their youth. Ninety-five per cent of the women who did not enter service did not migrate at all before their marriage. Within the mobile servant group, location of

TABLE 4

Location of residence of Zeeland women born 1835–1927 after marriage, by work experience (service or not) and independent migration trajectory in youth (in %)[a]

	Location of residence after marriage					
Work and migration experience in youth	*Community of birth*	*Region of birth*	*Other region in Zeeland*	*Outside Zeeland*	*%*	*Marriages (N)*
Service	*31*	*25*	*7*	*37*	*100*	*211*
Regional trajectory (within Zeeland)	23	19	2	10	54	111
Mixed trajectory	4	5	4	12	25	56
Out-migrated trajectory	4	1	1	15	21	44
No service	*55*	*23*	*6*	*16*	*100*	*318*
No migration	54	22	5	13	94	301
Regional trajectory (within Zeeland)	1	1	0	0	2	3
Mixed trajectory	0	0	1	1	2	6
Out-migrated trajectory	0	0	0	2	2	8
Marriages (N)	241	125	32	131		529

[a] On the basis of sampled women born in Zeeland, 1835–1927, who contracted a marriage (N = 529). Significant difference between servants and other women: Pearson $X^2 = 37{,}343(3)$, $p = 0.000$; Cramer's $V = 0.266$, $p = 0.000$.

Source: HSN release MFZ.02/MFZ.03 (see note to Table 1).

settlement was associated with radius of migration. Of regionally migrating servants, only 12 per cent settled outside Zeeland, while more than 45 per cent of out-migrating servants settled outside the boundaries of their birth province.[56] When we remind ourselves that out-migrated trajectories were often linked up with service positions in the cities, it might be claimed that urban domestic service was an important channel of neolocal settlement of rural-born women. This finding points towards the widening of marriage fields and sheds light on the process of decreasing geographical endogamy in the twentieth century.

Was service a turning point in rural women's lives in terms of their social position at marriage? A multivariate regression analysis was performed in order to estimate the relative effects of family circumstances, individual migration trajectories and work-experience, and of geographic and historical conditions on the social position women attained at marriage (see Table 5, Model 1).[57] The findings of the regression show that women's social position at marriage was related to the historical setting in which they spent their childhood and youth. Women born between 1835

TABLE 5

Determinants of social position at marriage of Zeeland women born 1835–1927, by occupational position of marriage partner (unstandardized linear regression coefficients)[a]

	Occupational position of spouse	
	Model 1	*Model 2*[b]
FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES		
Occupational category, father		
Higher occupations	0.26	0.26
Merchants, shopkeepers and artisans (ref.)	0	0
Lower civil servants, teachers and supervisors	0.62	0.71*
Farmers	−0.19	−0.20
Skilled labourers	−0.01	−0.03
Unskilled labourers with land in use	−0.79****	−1.06****
Unskilled labourers without land in use	−1.01****	−1.35****
Unskilled labourers land use unknown	−0.20	0.03
Literacy, father		
Literate (ref.)	0	0
Literacy unknown	−0.05	−0.07
Illiterate	−0.13	−0.17
Religion, father		
Dutch reformed (ref.)	0	0
Roman Catholic	−0.13	−0.09
Calvinist denominations	0.19	0.15
Death of father		
Father alive (ref.)	0	0
Father deceased	−0.09	−0.06
Death of mother		
Mother alive (ref.)	0	0
Mother deceased	−0.02	−0.03
Number of siblings		
Number of older brothers	−0.05	−0.03
Number of younger brothers	−0.02	−0.01
Number of older sisters	0.10	0.09
Number of younger sisters	−0.01	−0.01
Parents' network		
Parents born in birthplace of servant (ref.)	0	0
One born outside birthplace of servant	0.145	0.14
Both born in other communities	0.254	0.23
Number of family migrations	−0.04	−0.04
INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE IN YOUTH		
Work experience		
No service	0	0
Service	−0.79**	−1.15***

TABLE 5. (*Cont.*)

	Occupational position of spouse	
	Model 1	*Model 2*[b]
Migration experience		
No migration	0	0
Regional trajectory	0.54	0.13
Mixed trajectory	0.10*	0.59
Out-migrated trajectory	0.03**	0.82**
Interactions		
Service* father's occupation = unskilled laborer with land		0.80***
Service* father's occupation = unskilled laborer no land		0.96***
HISTORICAL CIRCUMSTANCES		
Birth cohort		
1835–1852	−0.84***	−0.78***
1853–1862 (ref.)	0	0
1863–1872	−0.21	−0.20
1873–1882	−0.57**	−0.53**
1883–1892	−0.27	−0.25
1893–1902	−0.41	−0.38
1903–1912	−0.52*	−0.47*
1913–1927	0.36	0.34
Intercept	3.02****	3.12****
N	491	491
Adj. R^2	0.155	0.171

[a] On the basis of the 0.5 per cent sample of all Zeeland women born 1835–1927, described in the text. * = significant at $p < 0.10$ level, ** = significant at $p < 0.05$ level, *** = significant at $p < 0.01$ level, **** = significant at $p < 0.001$ level.
[b] Model 2 includes interactions (two more covariates than Model 1).

and 1852 fared relatively worse on the marriage market. They spent their early childhood in a time of economic scarcity and massive poverty in the rural Zeeland delta marked by the potato blight of 1845. Women belonging to the 1873–1882 cohort also achieved significantly lower marriage positions. These adolescents reached the age of 18 between 1891 and 1900 and at that age they experienced the agricultural depression. The same held true for the birth 1903–1912 cohort, who were confronted during their youth with the economic recession of the late twenties and early thirties. Because of Zeeland's poor economic conditions and diminished labour-market opportunities, rural-born women of marriageable age had less chance of finding a spouse. Apart from historical conditions, the role played by family circumstances (such as the presence of parents, the familial network and religion, and the number and parity of siblings) in

determining social position at marriage was also considered. Not surprisingly, the father's occupational group had a significant effect on the status that women attained at marriage. Specifically, young women from unskilled labouring backgrounds married men of lower social status than women from other social classes.

Independent out-migration during one's youth had a positive effect on the social position at marriage, most likely because urban marriage markets offered a more diverse choice of potential marriage candidates than did rural communities.[58] Interestingly enough, the experience of working as a servant prior to one's marriage did not ameliorate one's position at marriage. Indeed, service even stigmatized women's marriage chances. However, it could have been that re-socialization as a servant in a middle-class lifestyle and the resources offered by service, such as a general education, household abilities and social skills, were only beneficial to young women from disadvantaged backgrounds. In Model 2 an interaction between fathers' occupational group and service experience in youth shows that service indeed positively influenced the marriage position of women from unskilled-labouring-class families. Independent of where women migrated as servants, the work setting of service as such dampened the strong negative effect of their unskilled-labouring-class background on the social position that they attained at marriage.

V. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study of service in the lives of rural-born women has shown how different cohorts of Dutch women, born in the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, spent their youth and adolescence, and confronted changing social conditions, adjusting their choices and behaviour accordingly. In particular, the processes of industrialization and urbanization, and the ensuing change in the nature of the institution of service – from regional farm to urban domestic service – offered subsequent generations of young women increasing alternatives for out-migration within a centuries-old framework of life-cycle service. The experience of out-migration to urban and more diverse marriage markets, and for some categories of women also the work setting of urban service itself, enhanced their possibilities for contracting advantageous marriages and neolocal post-marital residence.

The findings of this study have repercussions both for family history – and particularly for research based on the concept of family strategies – and for the history of youth. As has been mentioned earlier, an often-heard critique of family-strategies research is its prime focus on the family unit and its marginalization of the wills and wants of individual family

members and the conflicts between them. Moreover, it has been argued that both from a theoretical and from a methodological point of view the study of the 'family life course' is incompatible with that of the life courses of individual family members.[59] This study shows that entering into service by a daughter was a family-based decision, which was taken against the background of poverty-struck and distress-ridden households. However, although parents often took this decision for the purpose of bettering the whole family unit, it had independent, and in this case unintentional, effects on the life of the family member involved. In this way not only biographical continuities but also intriguing discontinuities in lives are laid bare. Only by applying a life-course perspective, which centralizes individual lives within their immediate and larger social contexts, can these biographical dynamics be made visible. Secondly, this study contributes to an understanding of the changing experience of being young in the past. For large parts of the population from the Middle Ages up until at least the first decades of the twentieth century, service was a central element of life for young people. This experience vanished altogether from the youth phase of women in Western societies during the course of the twentieth century, to be replaced by formal schooling and new employment opportunities.[60] However, during the period of social change associated with urbanization and industrialization, urban domestic service can be conceptualized as a mediating locus, both being influenced by social change and in turn influencing those who experienced it.

Future research is needed in order to investigate whether the impact of life-cycle service reached further than the geographical and social position at the start of adulthood, and also had an impact on demographic transitions and social positions later in life, such as for instance the timing and spacing of the birth of children, the occupational choices of married women and mortality chances. Moreover, additional study should also try to find out to what extent spending one's youth as a domestic servant influenced the lives of the friends and peers who stayed behind.[61] Finally, it would be useful to study the impact of service over several generations. Servants were not always able to live out the skills, attitudes and aspirations they had internalized during their careers, but they might have handed down these practices and ideals to their sons and daughters. Commenting on the skills, lifestyle and customs she needed in her job at a vicarage, an example of the intergenerational dimension of service is given by a former servant who was born in 1916 as a daughter of a farm hand, but whose mother had worked as a servant:

Well, my mother had also always served in a vicar's family. So we learned all those things actually already at home. My mother had been there for 15 years, so she was totally into it, so that was the same for us. Because, what you learn when you are very young, you hand

it down and this way it was also with my mother. So we had learned already many of these things when we were young.[62]

Thus, future studies should show to what extent rural-born women who during their youth had worked in urban domestic service were indeed active agents in the process of social change related to urbanization and industrialization, by living out urban norms and manners in their own life course, by spreading them to those in their non-servant age group in the countryside and by handing them down to their children and grandchildren.

ENDNOTES

1 The concepts of 'youth' and 'adolescence' are used interchangeably in this article in order to denote young people from about age 12 until the age of marriage.
2 Kathleen Alaimo, 'Childhood and adolescence in modern European history', *Journal of Social History* **24** (1991), 591.
3 Philippe Ariès, *Centuries of childhood: a social history of family life* (New York, 1962); John Gillis, *Youth and history: tradition and change in European age relations, 1770–present* (New York, 1974); Joseph Kett, *Rites of passage: adolescence in America, 1790 to the present* (New York, 1977).
4 See Colin Heywood, *Childhood in nineteenth century France: work, health, and education among the 'classes populaires'* (Cambridge, 1988); J. Robert Wegs, *Growing up working class: continuity and change among Viennese youth, 1890–1938* (University Park, 1989); and Anna Davin, *Growing up poor: home, school, and street in London 1870–1914* (London, 1996).
5 Peter Laslett, 'Characteristics of the western family considered over time', in *Family life and illicit love in earlier generations: essays in historical sociology* (Cambridge, 1977), 34.
6 Laslett, 'Characteristics of the western family', 31–3.
7 These figures apply to the Danish island of Moen. In England, about 40 per cent of the population might have gone into service (ibid., 34). In the municipality of Alphen in the Dutch province of Brabant, 60 per cent of all adolescents entered service in the second half of the eighteenth century; see A. Lindner, 'De dynamische analyse van huishoudens te Alphen, 1753–1803', in G. J. N. van den Brink, A. M. D. van der Veen and A. M. van der Woude eds., *Werk, kerk en bed in Brabant. Demografische ontwikkelingen in oostelijk Noord-Brabant 1700–1920* (Den Bosch, 1989), 69.
8 Jannie Poelstra, *Luiden van een andere beweging. Huishoudelijke arbeid in Nederland 1840–1920* (Amsterdam, 1996), 174.
9 Michael Mitterauer, 'Servants and youth', *Continuity and Change* **5** (1993), 29–33.
10 See Laslett, 'Characteristics of the western family'. John Hajnal, 'Two kinds of pre-industrial household formation system', in R. Wall, J. Robin and P. Laslett eds., *Family forms in historic Europe* (Cambridge, 1983); and Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux, 'Servants in preindustrial Europe: gender differences', *Historical Social Research* **23** (1998), 112–29.
11 See for example Michiel Baud and Theo Engelen, 'Introduction: structure or strategy? Essays on family, demography, and labor from the Dutch N. W. Posthumus Institute', *The History of the Family: An International Quarterly* **2** (1997), 347–54; Jan Kok, 'Youth labor migration and its family setting; the Netherlands 1850–1910', *The History*

of the Family: An International Quarterly **2** (1997), 507–26; Tamara Hareven, *Families, history, and social change: life-course and cross-cultural perspectives* (Boulder, 2000), 77–101.

12 Laurence Fontaine and Jürgen Schlumbohm, 'Household strategies for survival: an introduction', *International Review of Social History* **45** (2000), 5–6; Pier Paolo Viazzo and Katherine Lynch, 'Anthropology, family history, and the concept of strategy', *International Review of Social History* (2002), 423–52; Theo Engelen, 'Labour strategies: a critical assessment of an appealing concept', *International Review of Social History* (2002), 465–85.

13 See for the same criticism David Kertzer and Andrea Schiaffino, 'Industrialization and co-residence: a life-course approach', *Life-span Development and behavior* **5** (1983), 380, and David Kertzer, 'Living with kin', in D. I. Kertzer and M. Barbagli eds., *The History of the European Family*, Volume II: *Family life in the long nineteenth century 1789–1913* (New Haven and London, 2002), 68.

14 Laslett, 'Characteristics of the western family', 45–6; Mitterauer, 'Servants and youth', 29–31.

15 See Christer Lundh, 'The social mobility of servants in rural Sweden, 1740–1894', *Continuity and Change* **14** (1999), 57–89.

16 See Wilhelm R. Heinz and Helga Krüger 'Life course: innovations and challenges for social research', *Current Sociology* **49** (2001), 29–45; Janet Z. Giele and Glen Elder, Jr, 'Life course research: development of a field', in J. Z. Giele and G. H. Elder Jr (eds.), *Methods of life course research: qualitative and quantitative approaches* (Thousand Oaks, London, and New Delhi, 1998), 5–27; Gunhild O. Hagestad, 'Interdependent lives and relationships in changing times: a life-course view of families and aging', in R. A. Settersten Jr (ed.), *Invitation to the life course: toward new understandings of later life* (Amityville, 2002), 135–54; Tamara Hareven, 'Aging and generational relations: a historical and life course perspective', *Annual Review of Sociology* **20** (1994), 437–61.

17 Angela O'Rand, 'The precious and the precocious: understanding cumulative disadvantage and cumulative advantage over the life course', *The Gerontologist* **36** (1996), 230–38; Richard A. Settersten, *Lives in time and place: the problems and promises of developmental science* (Amityville, 1999), 130–2.

18 Robert J. Sampson and John H. Laub, 'Socio-economic achievement in the life course of disadvantaged men: military service as a turning point, circa 1940–1965', *American Sociological Review* **61** (1996), 347–67.

19 The idea of domestic service as a 'bridging occupation'originates from L. Broom and J. H. Smith, 'Bridging occupations', *British Journal of Sociology* **14** (1963), 321–34. For the relation between 'type' and 'place' of service positions and the socio-economic achievement of servants, see Sivert Langholm, 'Short-distance migration, circles and flows: movement to and from Ullensaker according to the population census lists of 1865', *The Scandinavian Economic History Review* **1** (1975), 36–62. On the more general relationship between long-distance migration and social mobility, see for instance William H. Sewell, *Structure and mobility: the men and women of Marseille, 1820–1870* (Cambridge, 1985), 310.

20 See Theresa McBride, *The domestic revolution: the modernization of household service in England and France 1820–1920* (New York, 1976), 82–98, and 'Social mobility for the lower classes: domestic servants in France', *Journal of Social History* **3** (1974), 63–78; Penelope Wilcox, 'Marriage, mobility and domestic service in Victorian Cambridge', *Local Population Studies* **29** (1982), 19–34; Edward Higgs, 'Domestic service and household production', in A. V. John ed., *Unequal opportunities: women's employment*

in England 1800–-1918 (Oxford, 1986), 141–3; Richard Wall, 'The family circumstances of women migrating permanently or temporarily to Sundsvall in the nineteenth century', *Scandinavian Economic History Review* **49** (2001), 58–60.

21 See for example Margareta Matović, 'Migration, family formation and choice of marriage partners in Stockholm, 1860–1890', in A. van der Woude, A. Hayami and J. de Vries eds., *Urbanization in history: a process of dynamic interactions* (Oxford, 1990), 220–42.

22 See for the same argument in the study of historical migration Paul-André Rosental, *Les sentiers invisibles: espace, familles et migrations dans la France du 19e siècle* (Paris, 1999), 27–34.

23 See Hilde Bras, 'Domestic service, migration and the social status of women at marriage: the case of a Dutch sea province, Zeeland 1820–1935', *Historical Social Research* **23** (1998), 19. In this article I have analysed the effect of service on social position at marriage on the basis of marriage certificates.

24 See Herman A. Diederiks et al., *Van agrarische samenleving naar verzorgingsstaat. De modernisering van West-Europa sinds de vijftiende eeuw* (Groningen, 1992), 185; Jan Luiten van Zanden, *De economische ontwikkeling van de Nederlandse landbouw in de negentiende eeuw, 1800–1914,* A. A. G. Bijdragen, 25 (Wageningen, 1985), 69–70; and Poelstra, *Luiden van een andere beweging*, 169–70.

25 Peter Priester, *Geschiedenis van de Zeeuwse landbouw circa 1600–1910* ('t Goy-Houten, 1998), 54–5 and 68.

26 The islands of Schouwen-Duivenland, Sint-Philipsland, Tholen, Noord-Beveland and Zuid-Beveland constituted part of my sample. The island of Walcheren was excluded because its population registers were destroyed during the second World War. Zeeland Flanders was also excluded: as a part of the Belgian mainland, it had a distinct social and economic history.

27 See Hilde Bras, *Zeeuwse meiden. Dienen in de levensloop van vrouwen, ca. 1850–1950* (PhD thesis, Utrecht University), (Amsterdam, 2002), 186–8. For a more elaborate discussion of the Dutch population registers see Hilde Bras and Jan Kok, '"Naturally, every child was supposed to work": determinants of the leaving home process in the Netherlands, 1850–1940', in F. van Poppel, M. Oris and J. Lee eds, *The road to independence: leaving home in Eastern and Western societies* (Bern, 2003), 410–11.

28 Interviews at the Zeeland Documentation Centre (hereafter IZDC), in Middelburg (Zeeland), conducted by A. de Pagter, S. Littooij and M. Kunst, and the autobiography of Marie Verhoef-Theuns, *Grootmoeder vertelt*, vol. 1 (Bergen op Zoom, 1992). See also Staatscommissie voor den Landbouw (Government Committee for Agriculture), *Verslagen betreffende den oeconomischen toestand der landarbeiders in Nederland* (The Hague, 1908).

29 This six-layer occupational classification scheme is based on J. J. Giele and G. J. van Oenen, 'De sociale structuur van de Nederlandse samenleving rond 1850', *Mededelingen van de Nederlandse Vereniging voor Sociale Geschiedenis* **45** (1974), 2–32, and adapted by Frans van Poppel in *Trouwen in Nederland. Een historisch-demografische studie van de 19e en vroeg-20e eeuw* (The Hague, 1992), 138–40. A more elaborate categorization of the jobs in the six main occupational categories specifies: 1. Higher occupations: employers in industry, learned professionals, high civil servants and high-ranking military personnel; 2. merchants, shopkeepers, small entrepreneurs, millers and self-employed artisans; 3. lower civil servants, supervisors and foremen; 4. farmers and market gardeners; 5. skilled workers; craftsmen and women in small business, in building and in industry, skilled manual labourers in industry and servants; 6. casual and unskilled workers: casual labourers, unskilled labourers in crafts, industry, and agriculture and lower military personnel. See Bras, *Zeeuwse meiden*, 178 (Table B 2.5).

30 Because occupational titles do not distinguish between farm and domestic service and information on the occupations of employers is incomplete, 'servant' and 'service' are used inclusively to denote all kinds of co-resident servants and maids.
31 This per centage should be considered a minimum. The life courses of 79 per cent of the sample persons have been followed until marriage or until the age of 40. Emigration, missing or incomplete population-register data account for earlier losses. It can be estimated that, had all the life courses been examined, $100/79 \times 36 = 46$ per cent of the women in the sample would have entered service.
32 Bras, *Zeeuwse meiden*, 72 (Table 3.3).
33 *Ibid*., 116 (Table 6.1).
34 The same age of entry into service was also found for servants from other parts of the Netherlands. For the city of Delft in South Holland, George Welling, 'Migration of female domestic servants around 1900 in the Netherlands', in F. Bocchi and P. Denley, *Storia e Multimedia: Proceedings of the VIIth International Congres of the Association for History and Computing* (Bologna, 1994), 314–27. Jan Kok found for the provinces of Utrecht and South Holland that rural-born girls left home for work (not only service) when they were on average 18 years old; see Jan Kok, 'Migratie als gezinsstrategie in midden Nederland, 1850–1940', in Jan Kok et al., *Levensloop en levenslot. Arbeidsstrategieën van gezinnen in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw*, Historia Agriculturae, 29 (Groningen and Wageningen, 1999), 118.
35 See for instance Peter Laslett, *The world we have lost* (London, 1965), 14.
36 For the same kind of non-economic motives of urban migration see Joanne Meyerowitz, 'Women and migration: autonomous female migrants to Chicago, 1880–1930', *Journal of Urban History* **13** (1987), 152–4.
37 With event-history analysis a transition across a set of discrete states is studied while including the length of the time interval between entry and exit from a specific state. The results of an event-history analysis are presented in the form of relative risks. For each variable a subgroup functions as the reference category. In Table 2 for the variable 'death of father', those women with a father who was alive form the reference category. From the estimate for 'father deceased' it becomes clear that a woman whose father had died had a 1.65 times higher risk of entering service than a woman whose father was still alive. This effect, with all other factors held constant, is significant. For a more elaborate discussion of this technique see Hans-Peter Blossfeld and Götz Rowher, *Techniques of event history modeling: new approaches to causal analysis* (Mahwah, New Jersey, 1995) and Paul D. Allison, *Event history analysis: regression for longitudinal event data* (Beverly Hills, London and New Delhi 1984).
38 Because the group of unskilled labourers was very large and mostly consisted of agricultural labourers, I made a further distinction with regard to land use. Information about the possession or rent of a plot of land by unskilled labourers was gathered from the municipal land registers. Three groups of families of unskilled labourers were thus distinguished: those who owned or rented land, those who did not have land in use and a third category of families for whom no information about land use was found.
39 In cases where a mother died, the remarriage of the father and tensions with a stepmother could also have hastened the departure of girls into service. For the effects of broken families on the life course see Renzo Derosas and Michel Oris eds., *When Dad died: individuals and families coping with distress in past societies* (Bern, 2002).
40 For other studies showing the effect of younger sisters on girls' chances of leaving home see Christer Lundh, 'Servant migration in Sweden in the early nineteenth century', *Journal of Family History* **24** (1999), 65–6; Timothy W. Guinnane, 'Age at leaving home in Ireland', *Journal of Economic History* **56** (1992), 667; Richard H. Steckel, 'The age at

leaving home in the United States, 1850–1860', *Social Science History* **20** (1996), 523; and Bras and Kok, 'Naturally every child was supposed to work', 435.

41 A survey of Catholic domestic servants in 1957 showed that 63 per cent of them had sisters who were servants as well. Interestingly, two-thirds of them had a mother who had also been a servant; see Alfred van der Weijer, *Rapport van het onderzoek naar de arbeid en arbeidsvoorwaarden van de dienstmeisjes* (Utrecht, 1959), 15–17 and 20–3.

42 Van Zanden, *De economische ontwikkeling*, 69–70.

43 Staatscommissie voor den Landbouw, *Verslagen*, answers to question II.g.2.

44 Bras, 'Zeeuwse meiden', 100 (Table 5.6). For a more elaborate analysis of Zeeland servants' migration patterns, see Hilde Bras, 'Maids to the city: migration patterns of female domestic servants', *The History of the Family: an International Quarterly* **8** (2003), 217–46.

45 IZDC, 1900e25 (all translations from the interviews are by the author).

46 *Ibid*., 1905a20a.

47 *Ibid*., 1904c6e.

48 *Ibid*., 1905a20a.

49 *Ibid*., 1904c13.

50 *Ibid*., 1904c6e.

51 *Ibid*., 1904c6f.

52 *Ibid*., 1905a20a.

53 Bras, 'Maids to the city', 229.

54 Carol Coburn, 'Learning to serve: education and change in the lives of rural domestics in the twentieth century', *Journal of Social History* **25** (1991), 109.

55 Married couples were followed up to six months after their marriage in order to determine the community where they settled down.

56 There were 13 servants ($131/100 \times 10$) with regional migration trajectories who settled outside Zeeland; this is 12 per cent ($13/111 \times 100$) of all the married servants who had a regional trajectory. There were 20 servants ($131/100 \times 15$) with out-migrating trajectories who settled outside Zeeland; this is 45 per cent ($20/44 \times 100$) of all the married servants who had an out-migrating trajectory.

57 The social position at marriage has been measured by the occupational status of the marriage partner. For this purpose an ordinal occupational scale was created based on the six-layer classification scheme (see note 29, above).

58 The migration trajectories of all the women in the sample were reconstructed (if possible). As we see in Table 5, most out-migrated young women were servants.

59 Susan Cotts Watkins, 'On measuring transitions and turning points', *Historical Methods* **13** (1980), 181–17.

60 Apart from schooling, new employment opportunities for women, which appeared after the beginning of the twentieth century, also replaced domestic service as a life-course phase. These occupations, such as jobs in shop service, in low clerical positions and in industry, did not require co-residency with employers and offered women more leisure time and privacy. However, in other respects the difference with work in domestic service was not so large, with the exploitation of young labour by employers co-existing with a lack of commitment to the work on the part of their employees, who were eager to move on to something better.

61 Interviews and autobiographies testify to this influence. An example can be found in the autobiography of Marie Theuns, an urban domestic servant in the city of Leiden, who wrote about her occasional visits to her home village in the province of Brabant: 'And when I left church at Second Easter Day and the farmers' daughters walked behind me, one said: "but she does have a beautiful dress on"' (Verhoef-Theuns, *Grootmoeder vertelt*, 109).

62 IZDC, 1904c6e.